

AT A JOINT CULPEPER COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS/SCHOOL BOARD
WORK SESSION HELD IN THE CULPEPER COUNTY LIBRARY MEETING ROOM, ON
THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 11, 2003

CALL TO ORDER

Mr. John Coates called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m..

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE TO THE FLAG

Mr. Bill Simms led the members of both Boards in the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

MOMENT OF SILENCE IN REMEMBRANCE OF SEPTEMBER 11, 2001

Mr. Coates asked for a moment of silence in remembrance of those who lost their lives
on September 11, 2001.

ROLL CALL

Board of Supervisors Members Present:

John F. Coates, Chairman

Steven L. Walker, Vice-Chairman

William C. Chase, Jr.

Sue D. Hansohn

James C. Lee

Brad C. Rosenberger (arrived at 7:15 p.m.)

Carolyn S. Smith

BOS Staff Present:

Frank T. Bossio, County Administrator

Valerie H. Lamb, Finance Director

J. David Maddox, County Attorney

John C. Egertson, Planning Director

Peggy S. Crane, Deputy Clerk

School Board Members Present:

Robert Jenkins III, Chairman

Elizabeth Hutchins, Vice-Chair

Leanne Coladonato

Barton Hitchcock

W. Lamont Saunders

William O. Simms

Claudia Vento

School Board Staff Present:

Dr. David Cox, Division Superintendent

Colin Owens, Deputy Superintendent

Jeffrey Shomo, Clerk of the Board

Karen Parkinson, Deputy Clerk of the Board

Mary Grist

OPENING REMARKS BY THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS CHAIR

Mr. Coates thanked the members of both Boards for their attendance and stated that the
following needed to be determined: (1) How many schools the County actually needed, (2) the

schedule for building them, (3) the types of schools to be built, (4) where the schools would be built to best service the County, and (4) how taxpayers' money might best be used to accomplish these goals in a timely fashion.

OPENING REMARKS BY THE SCHOOL BOARD CHAIR

Mr. Jenkins thanked the Board of Supervisors for allowing the School Board to present information regarding the needs of the Culpeper County Public Schools. He stated the meeting would not be a decision-making session but a work session.

RE: PRESENTATION OF COMPREHENSIVE CAPITAL FACILITIES PLAN FOR THE SCHOOLS

Mrs. Hutchins introduced the PowerPoint presentation and stated that the VMDO Facilities Study had shown that the County's school system was not "O.K." She outlined in detail the deficiencies in facilities due to population growth, resulting in crowded conditions and lack of space in the high school for staff, students, parking, and equipment/records storage; as well as the lack of athletic fields. She stated that, in addition, the Government had set higher expectations on staff and students through the SOL's and the No Child Left Behind Act.

Mrs. Hutchins reported that the School Board had selected VMDO Architects in Charlottesville approximately 18 months ago to study school facilities in the County and to determine how to handle the school system's growing student population. She stated that VMDO studied growth of the community, visited the buildings and school sites, and assessed them for security, traffic flow, needs for repair, and additional space. She said that the VMDO findings had been presented to the School Board, the Board of Supervisors, and the Town Council, as well as to members of the public through three community workshops to obtain public input. She stated that the School Board was recommending Phase I of the VMDO Study as the Schools' Capital Improvement Plan (CIP), and that Phase II be reevaluated in 2007. She explained that Phase I included building a new high school in 2006, at an estimated cost of \$43.8 million; renovating the current high school in 2007, estimated at \$20.2 million; building a new elementary school for 600 students in 2008, estimated at \$11.9 million; and renovating Sycamore Park Elementary School in 2008, estimated at \$6.5 million. She asked for the Board of Supervisors' approval and funding to proceed with the recommended CIP.

Mrs. Hitchcock presented statistic information on enrollment history, which indicated that over the last five years, *overall* enrollment increased 11.7%, with a 9.3% increase in elementary enrollment, a 13.6% in middle school enrollment, and 20.4% in high school enrollment. She explained the slides regarding enrollment projections were based upon the Cohort Survival

Ratio (an enrollment projection method which essentially compares the number of students in a particular grade to the number of students in the previous grade during the previous year). She explained in detail the time line for Phase I.

Mrs. Coladonato discussed the slides regarding assessment of the various facilities and their physical condition. She reviewed two options considered by VMDO: (1) to merge the high school and middle school to accommodate 3,000 students, which would involve some additions and renovations; or (2) to renovate the current high school for 1500 students, renovate the middle school for 800 students, and create additional fields. She repeated the Phase I recommendation and its attendant costs, as discussed above.

Mrs. Vento pointed out the advantages of smaller schools, such as higher attendance rates, higher grades, and fewer dropouts and presented research to substantiate the information. She stated that the consequences of larger schools were higher crime rates, increased cost of incarceration, more violence in schools, more families receiving public assistance, and underutilization of the talents of a large number of students. She cited the examples of Farmington as the smallest elementary school, but the first school to be fully accredited in 2000; and Culpeper Middle School and Floyd T. Binns Middle School fully accredited after one year as separate schools.

Mr. Simms discussed the challenges of the impact of growth upon safety, security and discipline. He stated that safety and security was the number one concern among parents, teachers, and students.

Mr. Simms indicated the changes that had taken place in vocational education over the last 30 years and pointed out that a higher academic level was required today for career and technical education. He stated that space was needed for expansion of career and technical education programs.

Mr. Saunders explained the importance of increased facilities for athletics and activities, which would provide more opportunities for the community; community use of facilities with more library/media space, facility space, and meeting rooms; and playing fields, practice fields, and gymnasiums. He noted that more students could participate in these activities by having two high schools.

Mrs. Coladonato explained that the decision to build two schools, versus one school, was based primarily on an academic infrastructure and that one 3000-student school was too large. She stated that two schools would result in greater community and parental involvement; safety and security in the halls, grounds and traffic; better managed discipline; greater

opportunities for the students, and less travel time for sports teams. She added that it was financially more advantageous in the long-term to have two new schools rather than one. She pointed out that the major community concern was the cost and increased burden to taxpayers, but she felt that the cost to the community would be greater for not moving forward because the longer the wait, the more expensive it would be.

Mrs. Coladonato discussed various funding options such as Literary Loans, proffers by developers to be used for new school construction, public-private partnerships, and the Virginia Public School Authority (VPSA). She said the VPSA provided low interest rates, allowed payments to be spread out over time, and provided debt refinancing. She stated that the School Board felt that good schools equaled good business opportunities and that delaying would ultimately be more expensive to the taxpayers. She said that interest rates were historically low, timing was critical to access state supported funding, and the County could change the debt policy without significantly impacting its bond rating. She explained that the primary concern of the School Board was that even using the most conservative student-to-unit ratio of .72, high school and elementary capacity would be reached in 2006. She stated that in order to have a new high school ready for use by the 2006-07 school year, the School Board needed to have a financial commitment from the Board of Supervisors by the end of October to fund Phase I, beginning with \$1.5 million.

Mrs. Hitchcock indicated enrollment projection charts and noted that the current high school would be out of space by 2006. She stated that with the population of Culpeper County continuing to grow, a new high school was needed now.

Mr. Jenkins summarized the presentation by stating that everything affected academics, and the ability to educate County students impacted the total community; i.e., businesses, public safety, employment, the tax base, quality of life and improved citizenship. He stated that the County could not afford to continue to wait and the time to act was now. He urged the Board of Supervisors to give an affirmative response by the end of October.

Mr. Coates thanked the members of the School Board for their presentation and asked if there were any questions.

Mrs. Hansohn pointed out that references had been made regarding a smaller school of 1500 students and stated that the existing high school had 1500 students and it was not working. Mrs. Coladonato replied that the present high school had 1800 students and that was why it was not working.

Mrs. Hansohn agreed that a new school was needed, but felt that the 1500 capacity seemed to be a large school which would have the same problems that already existed. She asked how many faculty staff would need to be hired for a 1500-student high school. Mrs. Hitchcock replied that the ratio was 25 to one for high schools and 20 students to one teacher for elementary schools, with special ed requiring three or five students per teacher.

Mrs. Hansohn pointed out that the Board of Supervisors needed to be aware of the costs of hiring staff for a new school and none of those costs had been included in any of the estimates presented. She asked whether consideration had been given to moving administrative staff out of Floyd T. Binns to free up classroom space. Mrs. Hitchcock stated that was being considered for Phase II. Dr. Cox added that scenario would free six to eight classrooms.

Mrs. Hansohn questioned whether a stadium would be included in any phase. Mrs. Hutchins replied that a stadium had been included with the proposed new high school.

Mr. Chase relayed a concern he had received from a constituent regarding the high cost for the recommended square footage of a new school and the fact that it provided for a "Cadillac" system, rather than a bare-bones type. He questioned whether the consultants were independent and whether they would have the option to bid on building these new schools. Mrs. Hutchins replied that the consultants would have the option of bidding, as will other qualified architectural firms.

Mrs. Smith asked whether the School Board had considered vocational education in the process for students who were not college bound. Mrs. Vento replied that the School Board's Career and Technical Advisory Committee had recently passed a five-year plan. Mrs. Hutchins stated that program offerings could not be increased without additional space.

Mrs. Smith pointed out that there might be a tendency to group vocational education offerings together for cost effectiveness. Mr. Simms stated there would not be any duplication between the two schools.

Mr. Jenkins stated that he hoped the School Board could do what the Board members had suggested, but the need was a community need. He pointed out that the School System was required to operate under the State Code and regulations and certain operations were mandated. He stated that he did not see anything wrong in wanting quality, rather than just a bare-bones facility.

Mrs. Smith agreed that additional schools were needed, but bricks and mortar do not make the best schools. She stated that the County not only had to pay for the schools, but it

had to meet the demands of the Federal Government, while endeavoring to conserve the taxpayers' money.

Mrs. Hansohn suggested that a committee be established with members from the School Board, Board of Supervisors and community to meet and decide what was needed. She stated that the committee could visit different schools with different architects, and it may find that the very same school with some modifications could be built on one of the County's sites at a lesser cost because the engineering and architectural work had already been done. She stated that there were many things the Board needed to know before it could approve spending \$43 million. She stated she could not vote on \$43 million without having additional information.

Mrs. Hitchcock stated that the School Board was seeking a commitment from the Board of Supervisors to fund the new schools. She agreed that a committee should be formed to study exactly what was needed for design, etc.

Mrs. Hansohn informed the School Board not to expect the Board of Supervisors to agree to spend \$43 million at its October meeting. Mrs. Hitchcock repeated that the School Board was not asking for an agreement to spend \$43 million, but for a commitment that the Board of Supervisors would support the School Board on building a new high school, with approximately \$1.5 million seed money. She said they were not trying to spend as much money as possible, but they wanted a school that was well built and well equipped, and as quickly as possible because there was no time to waste.

Mrs. Hansohn stated that the Board of Supervisors needed to look at what had already been done that was affordable. She pointed out that there were not only capital costs to be considered, but also huge operational costs.

Mrs. Hansohn inquired whether the School Board had considered any sites in the Stevensburg area. Mr. Chase added that there was the land the County had purchased and the School Board could save \$1 million if there were used. Mrs. Hitchcock stated that various sites had been discussed but no decision could be made without a commitment from the Board of Supervisors.

Mrs. Coladonato inquired whether the Board of Supervisors could agree to fund Phase I without a hard number for planning purposes. She pointed out that the Planning Commissions had been working with developers in an effort to share the costs of growth, but the Town/County could not proceed with proffers without having the School Division's CIP for new school construction upon which to base the proffers.

Mr. Saunders stated that it was difficult to locate vocational education professionals certified to teach because they could earn more working in their vocations than teaching in a classroom. Mrs. Smith suggested that local officials work with elected State officials to have the General Assembly address having different forms of certifications for vocational ed teachers.

Mr. Coates stated that several years ago the Board of Supervisors met with its legislators and asked for assistance of the State Board of Education and others in providing some prototypes for schools that could be made available at considerable savings to the counties, but he never heard back from them.

Mr. Lee thanked the members of the School Board for their presentation. He pointed out that the initial request was for a commitment from the Board of Supervisors for \$1.5 million seed money.

Mr. Coates thanked the School Board, Board of Supervisors, the administrative staffs and those in the audience for attending. He also thanked Channel 21 and the local newspapers for providing coverage.

Mr. Jenkins thanked everyone and stated that everyone on both Boards was trying to work together get things accomplished.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 8:50 p.m.

Peggy S. Crane, CMC
Deputy Clerk

John F. Coates, Chairman
Culpeper County Board of Supervisors

ATTEST:

Frank T. Bossio
Clerk to the Board

APPROVED: October 7, 2003